



*You are stronger  
than you  
think!*

# A Rescued Life

A Story of Secrets and Shame,  
Hope and Healing

TAMELA TURBEVILLE





## Praise for *A Rescued Life*

“Tamela Turbeville is one of the best storytellers I’ve had the pleasure of coaching. It may have taken her forty years to believe her story mattered, but it is because of her reluctance that makes you trust her all the more. Let Tamela help take you through the process of removing your secrets of shame to find freedom, hope, and healing to believe your story matters (because it does).”

—**Renee Fisher**, Life Coach and Author of  
*Forgiving Others, Forgiving Me*

*A Rescued Life* is a gift for every person who has been wounded by the brokenness of our world. Tamela uses poignant imagery and captivating details to offer hope and healing as she shares the difficult, shameful, and traumatic parts of her own story. If you’re ready to find healing from your past, claim victory over shame, and uncover hope in your heartache, this book is a must-read for you.”

—**Stacey Pardoe**, author of *Flourish in the Fire* and  
founder of *Encountering God in the Ordinary*

“I am so thankful for Tamela’s honest sharing of her story. Through her transparency and Christ-centeredness, she has offered readers an opportunity to reflect on the mercy and goodness of the Lord in their own journeys!”

—**Ann Swindell**, author of *Still Waiting: Hope for  
When God Doesn’t Give You What You Want*

“In her book *A Rescued Life*, Tamela tells the story of a world where she felt worthless and the God who pursued and rescued her. This story shines light through the cracks, the places where we are broken,

and radiates hope. You cannot put this book down without first grabbing hold of a handful of feel-good affirmation of your worth to a God who pursues and rescues the lost girl in each of us.”

—**Laurie Hampton**, *Beautifully Broken*  
([www.lauriehampton.com](http://www.lauriehampton.com))

“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.’ The first half of Romans 6:23 explains our problem (the problem we ALL have) and the second half explains God’s rescue plan (His plan for ALL of us). God’s perfect rescue plan runs through the entire Bible. In *A Rescued Life*, Tamela shares openly and transparently about her Romans 6:23a-life. She proves “the wages of sin is death” to be true. And then...God’s rescue plan unfolded. He rescued her! He alone rescues! Tamela shows us why Jesus came and suffered in an evil, evil world. Why? To rescue us. And praise God, His gift is both free and eternal!”

—**Debbie Moore**, Arkansas Baptist State Convention,  
Missions Team/Consultant, Arkansas WMU  
Executive Director

“Enter a typical school classroom and know that one or more of the youngsters seated there will have suffered childhood sexual abuse. Writer Tamela Turbeville transforms statistics into stark reality in the brave and harrowing tale of abuse in her own early life, as well as the effects she lived with for years. Her recovery is not a quick fix. It unfolds over decades. She generously takes her audience through many traumatic years and missteps to a resolution that is realistic and inspiring. This is a brave book. Readers will find both realism and hope in Tamela Turbeville’s superb story.”

—**Dr. Toran Isom**, Writing Faculty Emeritus,  
University of Arkansas—Little Rock, Department of  
Rhetoric and Writing

“Statistically, one in six women in the United States experience sexual abuse/assault. This creates a trauma that goes to the very core of a woman’s soul and can negatively impact every area of her life. Scripture tells us to “lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1b, ESV). The past sixteen years of working in women’s ministry have taught me that the greatest weight women carry is the trauma of sexual abuse. I am so grateful for Tamela revealing her journey to spiritual freedom. It is my prayer that through her transparency and incredible courage, women will realize they are not alone and seek out Christian help.”

—Debra K. Burchfield, CEO, Hope of the Delta



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Hope and Healing**



**TAMELA TURBEVILLE**



## Dedication

*To God.*

*You gave me this story to tell.*

*To my sons, Ian, Kyle, and Ryan.*

*I love you more than you will know.*

*You are the reason I can tell this story.*





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## Foreword

I have had the sacred opportunity to journey alongside some of the bravest people on the planet. While many adventurers may daringly step into places unknown, only the bravest of souls will willfully choose to trek into places of the past to face the traumatic memories of childhood. I have been privileged to witness firsthand the seeds of healing that grow along this journey and the chains of shame that are broken along the path to freedom. To be trusted as a guide on this sacred journey is a considerable honor, but the greatest joy of all is watching as a brave, yet fearful soul becomes the hero his or her story needs.

It was through Tamela's determination and fight that she became the rescuer in her story for the little girl whose voice was taken, leaving her feeling forever lost. This act of rescue allowed her to discover how loveable and worthy she has always been and how God was faithful to pursue His beloved. Week after week, I was an audience to how God was healing her as she was learning to embrace her bravery and strength. We often ended sessions in prayer and the reminder, "You are stronger than you think you are."

You are also stronger than you think you are. Like with Tamela, encouragement and support from another can motivate you to take the next step toward healing. The internal dialog that you listen to also has a great impact on the steps you take. For instance, there is a big difference between the voice of conviction and the voice of shame. The voice of conviction sounds like those precious words Tamela heard say, "Try counseling." Too often, the voice of conviction is drowned out by the lies from the all-too-familiar voice of shame. What does that voice of conviction sound like for you? What about the voice of hope? The wise words you need to hear may very well be found in

the encouragement you have offered a friend. You, likewise, deserve the same compassion.

This memoir was years in the making and beautifully scripted out of true healing that comes from our Heavenly Father. Every page points to God's amazing love for those who have suffered and lost. Join Tamela on this journey to find the freedom that you were created to know and experience.

—April, Licensed Professional Counselor\*

\*Name has been changed to protect confidentiality.

## Introduction: Why Tell This Story?

Keeping a secret has been called an “obsession in a jar.” A secret will not go away. Depending on the type of secret, the more you try to hide it, the more you think about it. The more you think about it, the more that secret leads your life. The more potent the secret, the more damage it creates. Compound a potent secret with the unnecessary shame of rape or sexual assault, and that secret can be terminal.

Statistically, one in six women are victims of sexual abuse or assault, most often as children.<sup>1</sup> I know from experience that this statistic is accurate, and most of you know it is true as well. You either have experienced the pain of abuse or know someone who has.

Until the most recent decade, sexual abuse of any kind was a taboo topic. When I was growing up, the subject was not mentioned—anywhere. There was no yearly awareness campaign or speeches made by the high school counselor. If it happened to you, you kept it a secret. So, I did.

At the time I suffered sexual abuse—during the 1970s—awareness was just being born and would not be fully grown until after I suffered for forty years from the shame that was not mine. When it happened to me, it was decades before the #MeToo movement would arrive and give sexually assaulted women the voice and strength to tell their secret. I applaud and offer my gratitude to the women who courageously paved the way for women like me to tell their stories.

Before it was acceptable to talk about sexual assault, during the “between” years, I lived under the heavy weight of the secret and shame. When the #MeToo movement finally arrived, the damage was done. The secrets and shame led to a whole list of destructive choices and a life of sin. The years between the secret made and the secret told were dark years for me.

I did not understand what was happening. I did not link the past to the present. I did not see that the shame given me by a teenage boy one summer afternoon was not mine, yet I carried it through decades of fear, depression, addiction, and so much more. The secret and the shame changed who I was and who I would become.

I believed I would never tell. I believed if I told the secret no one would love me, want me, or even believe me. Which is ironic, because I believed at the same time that I was unlovable, unwanted, and not worth noticing even if I kept the secret. I was unlovable if I told and unlovable if I didn't. It was a double-edged secret.

But when I exposed the secret to light, just the opposite happened. Telling the secret saved me. It freed me to see that God loves me, God was and is with me, and God fights for me. I believe He rescued me so I could tell the story of my secret and shame and share how telling leads to healing and hope.

*I believe  
He rescued me so  
I could tell the story  
of my secret and  
shame and share  
how telling  
leads to healing  
and hope.*

This rescue story has been nearly sixty years in the making. If the enemy had his way, it never would have been started.

There were obstacles upon obstacles that he threw in my path to deter God's plan. I should have given up years ago and let it go, but I could not. I must tell about the great things He has done for me (Psalm 22:22).

If I look back at my teenage years, I see the little girl harmed by rape, and then just years later God placed a desire and a dream in her to write. See how the two were lining up? It would be over forty years before the lines converged, but they did. In between, that same girl would live under the control of shame, not the love of God. Choices would be guided by shame, not freedom.



Eventually, I pursued writing and completed an undergraduate and a master's degree in writing. In the meantime, God wove together a story of secrets and shame knowing I would be rescued at just the right time, and at the exact perfect moment I would be able to write this story. He designed a life of secrets and shame that would be redeemed by hope and healing. Then, He gave me the opportunity to share it with the world.

I did not want to write this story as a memoir. When I knew God called me to write this story, I began like most novice writers, copying other writers. I wanted a Beth Moore-like Bible study and to use my story to illustrate biblical concepts. It did not work. In fact, it was awful. It was painful to write and even more painful to read!

Not until my gifted and God-sent dream defender, Renee Fisher, suggested I remove the “preaching” did the story finally flow. God is still there in the story. There is no way my story is redeemed without His presence and grace. I did nothing remarkable to reach freedom from secrets and shame and begin healing from sexual assault. No, it was all God. So, I guess that is the Bible lesson.

If you are one of the thousands of women who suffered sexual abuse of any kind and feel there is no way out of the shame prison, there is. Don't wait another day carrying shame that is not yours. Bring the secret out into the light. Compassionate counselors, survivors, and a host of other people are ready and poised to help.

So many of us have secrets. Your secret may not be abuse. Perhaps it's abortion, addiction, or adultery. And because of that secret you feel the heavy weight of shame. There is relief. There is freedom from your shame prison. There is God. You don't have to carry the secret or shame another day.

God is waiting to rescue you.





## CHAPTER 1



# Forty Years Later

## A Storm

Outside, I hear the sweetest summer thunderstorm rumbling through. Lightning flashes, thunderclaps roll, and sheets of torrential rain blow sideways. Out my window the weather rages and, oddly, I find it comforting, not only because I am safe, warm, and dry. I find it reassuring because I know the chaotic storm will blow over, and the earth and my garden will be better for its brief presence. In the meantime, it will be noisy, and sometimes scary, but if I hang on, and persevere, it will stop, and on the other side is peace. I learned this truth by surviving some pretty tumultuous storms.

Storms are born when two opposing forces collide. A cold and warm front smash together in the atmosphere, and with the right amount of moisture, the sky explodes. Friction between the two forces creates lightning. Then, the lightning heats the air as it heads toward the earth, causing startling thunderclaps that travel miles before disintegrating. After the storm tires and the friction ceases, the storm is replaced by a restful peace.

The storms that erupt in our lives are the same. They form through opposing forces like good and evil, trust and betrayal, kindness and hate, the past and the present. These forces create friction that leads

to a lot of noise and disruption—and possibly damage—and then fade, leaving room for God’s transforming, healing work to occur.

The tempests of life come in many forms, and their force depends on the circumstances that bring them about. Some storms can be seen brewing in the distance. For instance, tense relationships that cause harsh words or disagreements can cause smaller storms. These outbreaks come quickly, pour out emotions, and then subside, hopefully with minimal damage.

On other occasions, storms grow over time. These can be the result of ignoring a suffering marriage or rebellious children or the consequences of poor choices. These storms multiply and expand until they explode. Sometimes there is irreparable damage, and other times the explosion is needed to clear the air.

And yet other storms come out of nowhere. Unexpectedly, turmoil bursts forth. These emotional storms suddenly appear and cause unexpected heartache and pain. Perhaps these storms are the result of betrayal or broken trust, or a sudden illness or catastrophe. The destruction can take a lifetime to heal. This kind of storm swirls into a hurricane.

Some storms are quickly forgotten. Others, like a hurricane, linger in our memory and change the course of our lives. One such out-of-the-blue, hurricane-force storm I cannot forget. It crashed through my typical Monday five years back. Through grace, I was rescued and survived, but this storm changed the course of my life.

I was sitting in my car waiting for my youngest son to emerge from the high school building. I was scrolling through my Facebook feed, and suddenly his face was staring back at me. Boom, the thunder clapped and the lightning struck. A storm was born.

The “People You Might Know” category caught me completely off guard, because I did know him. It was him, that boy—now an old man. He looked right at me through the screen. I was unable to

move or look away. His face was staring at me, and he was doing it with a half-smirk on his lips.

The hurricane blew me sideways.

In a split second, some cosmic power grabbed me around the shoulders and in lighting speed thrust me back forty years. My peripheral vision blurred, and in a blink, it was summer 1974. I was an eleven-year-old girl with pigtails tied tight on opposite sides of my blonde head. My skinny suntanned legs were sticking out of a pair of jean shorts, and I leaned on the seat of a pink bicycle, resplendent with fringe on the handlebars and a white basket. The memory was so clear, I could smell the summer air and the scent of sweaty boys when they stood close together, laughing and punching each other on the arm.

The air left my lungs, and my chest grew too tight for me to take in a breath. Frozen, my eyes would not look away. It was like I was watching myself from the back seat of the car and everything was moving in slow motion.

Staring at the screen on my phone, I was trapped in the past. I had tried to forget this face for decades. But there it was looking at me—the boy who raped me.

After what seemed like hours of swirling around in the past in my head, my personal hurricane began to calm. I heard a ringing noise in my ears. I faintly made out a voice. “Mom, are you okay? Mom, what’s wrong?” My son was shaking my arm, bringing me back from the past. And as quickly as the universe shot into the past four decades, it boomeranged back to reality.

An hour after I returned home from the high school, I was curled up in bed with the covers pulled over my head. I sobbed until my pillow dripped, and I prayed my family could not hear me. I was reliving that day from forty years ago and felt the shame so

heavy I wanted to crawl on my hands and knees. I tried so hard to bury the memory of that summer day and forget his face. Obviously, I was unsuccessful. It was not so deep that a photo on social media couldn't unearth it.

I ached to rid myself of this memory. I had tried everything, but that moment in time kept creeping up, this time with a face. I needed a new plan.

My first plan went something like this: take multiple pills, mix with alcohol, and sleep. I had tried variations of this plan in the past. Every attempt failed, of course. As with the previous attempts, I hoped that someone found me before I passed from this world to the next. Not living seemed like a better choice than living a day longer with the secret of what happened in 1974. But, thankfully—gratefully—God has eyes on the tiniest sparrow blown off course by storms. And this storm had me flailing in the wind.

*God has eyes  
on the tiniest  
sparrow blown  
off course by  
storms.*



I worked desperately hard every day of every year for over four decades to keep the secret this boy left me with under control. There were times I actually forgot the secret for a moment. I would bury it deep under shame and regret. Then something would remind me. Sometimes the smell of cigarettes or the sound of a cola bottle popping open would make me remember, but mostly I kept the secret out of sight.

There was a time that I tried to tell myself that the secret I kept for forty years wasn't real, that maybe it didn't happen the way I remembered. Perhaps I asked for it in some way. Maybe it was my fault. The eleven-year-old little girl could not make sense of it.

After the boy next door raped me, I was too afraid to tell anyone. What would they think of me? My mother and father would surely

be so angry and embarrassed that I was their child. I tried to run from it, hide from it, escape it—but it always showed up in a flash of a memory, a smell, a word—and I would remember. I worked so hard to keep it under control, yet it escaped again and again. I was exhausted. My shame secret was chained to me, and there was no hope of escape. I had to do something drastic to unchain myself from this secret.

The next day, in my car, driving down the interstate, I was still formulating the plan. I cannot remember where I was going, but my destination sent me in the direction of a real storm forming on the horizon. Dark gray clouds multiplied in the distance, and I marveled at how they mirrored my mood—dark, rumbling, angry, and growing increasingly dangerous and about to explode. In no time, pouring rain pelted the windshield so hard the taillights of the car in front of me were barely visible.

Before I carried out any plan I would finally formulate, I decided I would ask God for help. Isn't it funny how we go to God *after* we have a plan, not before? Isn't it odd how we ask God for help with *our* plans, not giving a second thought to His plan? Shame is so powerful that it assumes God doesn't like us either, that He made a mistake and He would be happy to help us end our pain. That is the lie we believe, and after a while, it becomes our truth.

Driving my SUV along the three-lane interstate in pouring rain, I begged through streams of tears, "Take me, please. I cannot live another day. I want to drown." Maybe I thought He would cause me to wreck my car, and my family would mourn my death caused by a car accident and not by my own hand. "Take me. Stop the pain. Please, take me," I pleaded. When I think about that afternoon now, I laugh at the absurdity of my words. I begged to end my pain forever while at the same time I knew God is the one in control.

"I have this plan, God, but I don't want to carry it out. Would you make something else happen?"

As audibly as I could hear the contemporary Christian music playing on the radio and the hail thumping the roof of my car, I heard God's voice. "Try counseling," a small gentle voice said. It seems so silly now—God suggesting a therapist. I would have thought I was crazy if the voice had not pierced my soul. The words of the voice sounded like the advice from a trusted friend yet filled with authority. This was the opposite of what I wanted to hear. In the middle of a storm raging around me and in me, I wanted something drastic, final, and easy. But God suggested I try a few Christian counseling sessions. It seemed so crazy it could not have been my voice.

When God speaks, we think it should sound like Charlton Heston and the words be more biblical, "Go, therefore, and see a counselor." No, it was more like a flash of clarity. There was no condemnation or scolding, just an overwhelming peace, the turmoil of my inner storm turned off like a water faucet.

Of one thing I was sure: it was not my idea. Counseling or telling anyone any detail of my childhood was not, absolutely not, on my radar. I was more willing to commit suicide than tell the secret. But God said to see a counselor, and I believe for the first time in my life, I obeyed. And because I did, God saved my life. He rescued me.

Wiping away the tears, pulling into an empty parking lot, and composing myself, I called the only person I knew who was both dependent on God and connected to Christian counselors. I knew my friend would know who to call, and she did.

We can't see when it's happening, but God always puts just the right people in our path at just the right time. My dear friend did not know it then, but she was an instrument of God's plan to save me. She gave me the phone number of a counseling service that could help, and when I ended our call, I dialed the number.

I asked for an appointment as soon as possible. The lead counselor was not available for months and not taking new clients. Maybe the



receptionist heard the desperation in my voice, but she suggested the second counselor working in the office. Yes, I said without hesitation, I'll take it! I'll take the first appointment with any counselor. I was skeptical, but I would give God's plan a month. If it did not heal forty years of shame and secrets in thirty days, then I was going with my original plan—alcohol, drugs and a deep sleep. *You have one month, God, just one month.*

## Broken

Once a week, usually on Wednesday afternoons, I spirited away to meet April.\* I would learn in time that her counseling specialty is trauma more specifically abuse trauma. God knew exactly what I needed and who.

As each of our regular sessions drew near, I grew more and more excited. I was excited because our conversations opened a new door each week, removed another brick from the wall, and lightened my load of emotional rocks. I looked forward to our hours together, and I let nothing and no one get in the way. My life depended on being present at every appointment. And God only had thirty days.

I protected my time with April and sometimes may have treated our appointments as some kind of clandestine relationship. If someone asked about my plans for a midweek afternoon, I didn't hide that I was seeing a Christian counselor, but I also didn't share the information openly. Mostly because what usually followed my explanation was a combination of the awkward, uncomfortable phrases like, "That's great," and, "Everyone needs to see a counselor now and then." These were usually followed by a puzzled, anxious look that suggested they were thinking, *I wonder what's wrong with her?* Believe me, that is a deep ocean.

\*Name has been changed to protect confidentiality.

If I did let it slip about my standing appointment with a therapist, and someone compassionately or curiously asked why I was seeing a counselor, I mumbled something vague about childhood issues. Nothing more would be asked. “Childhood issues” was broad enough to leave someone imagining all the possibilities but specific enough for them to realize the wound was deep. The inquiry always stopped there.

April’s office was on the second floor of a local church’s family life building, and, being too proud to use the elevator, I always climbed the two flights of stairs, reaching the top step out of breath and gasping for oxygen. For a counselor, she was not what I had expected. She would blush at my description, but she is young, with beautiful dark eyes and a soothing voice. April is a mom of school-aged kids, and their pictures were carefully and proudly positioned on her desk. Taking my place in her office once I caught my breath, I sat down on her white leather couch, replete with throw pillows, my gaze instantly fixed on the flame flickering in the fake electric fireplace directly opposite. The glow was hypnotic. She kept the room slightly dark, which was comforting and made it feel less clinical. There was no clock on the wall or desk—also comforting.

Time seemed to stop when she shut the door. I immediately felt safe, secure. I could let my guard down and relax. She always started our sessions with, “So, how was your week?” And, of course, I would start pouring out the details of the previous seven days. My husband did this; my kids did that. I enjoyed going to church so much. Or, I cried all day Saturday and couldn’t get out of bed. Or, I ate an entire chocolate pie and felt better and worse at the same time. I realize her opening questions were ice breakers. It was a starting point, a place to jump from what was happening to what had happened.

I kept my promise. I gave God thirty days, and He was right. Seeing a counselor was helpful for the surface pain and turmoil. I embarrassingly admit that, for the first month, all I did was complain about what the world was doing to me. I complained about my

marriage, how my husband didn't respect me, that he didn't hear me. I talked about how I felt like I was falling apart. I spoke of my mother, my father, and my childhood. *What a mess*, she must have been thinking, while at the same time wondering if I could be any more self-centered. I was a mess.

## Breakthrough

During the first thirty days, April asked me to complete a timeline that included memorable events of my life from the day I was born through the present day. From top to bottom of a sheet of paper, I was to list every significant event of my fifty plus years on the left. On the right, I recorded how I was affected by the events. At the top, born December 1962. Not able to say how I felt about being born, but today, I am pleased with the outcome.

Several childhood memories listed on one side had left me stunned and broken. I recorded the day I ran away to New York City when I was eighteen. That was memorable! That event led to many distressful and shameful events in my twenties, creating more scars, of course. After I returned to my hometown five years later, other occasions left me ashamed and regretful as well. More on that later.

Not all of the events on the left side of the page left wounds. The birth of my first son was the day I learned how deep love goes. The moment I looked at his newborn eyes and perfect pink fingers and toes, my heart knew true unconditional love for the first time. Gratefully, that moment happened again a second and third time when second and third sons were born.

For a couple of months, during each appointment, April and I discussed the timeline and the major impactful events. I cried a lot and apologized for crying so much. I brought a personal box of tissues because I felt guilty for using so many of April's. April and I

talked through my childhood and growing up in my family of origin. If nothing else, the most important lesson I learned was how deeply parents impact their children.

On one Wednesday, when we were slicing away at the timeline and reviewing the story of my life in the Big Apple, I shared something that I almost forgot. After five years of hard living, drinking, and promiscuity, I was at the bottom of the pit—twenty years old, no job, and barely a place to live. I was desperate and alone.

My family could not and would not help me. There was no place to turn. I was so ashamed of how I arrived at that point that I was sure God could not and would not help either. I was the prodigal daughter, running away from home, squandering every asset I possessed. God, I believed, must have abandoned me. Why not? When I looked in the mirror, I saw trash, and I believed He did, too.

*When I looked  
in the mirror,  
I saw trash,  
and I believed  
He did, too.*



My solution was to do what I had become good at—giving myself away. But now it would not be free. My excuse, “It’s the only thing I was good at.”

Poor April. If she was shocked, she never flinched. She smiled supportively and listened, and I knew she was not judging me. I was safe. I could keep going if I needed to, and I needed to. The room was silent for a moment. I needed more tissue, and I was afraid April needed to process the information. Then she asked, “Why do you think that’s all you are worth?”

I knew the answer, but I had never, ever uttered the words. Not even come close. I believed my worth was tied to a secret. A secret never spoken, never written on paper, never hinted at in conversations. Never. To truly answer her question, I would have to tell the secret.

At first, it wouldn't come out. For more than forty years, the words were just under the surface, covered in layers of shame and regret, held down by fear. Here was the moment for exposing it to the light. The moment was right for fighting against the reins of shame.

The words crawled up my throat and out of my mouth like spiders. I could feel my tongue around the words I could never say. The sharp edges of the words ripped at my throat like they were trying to stay hidden. They wanted to crawl back to where they had lived for forty years. It was as if two forces were slamming up against each other. Darkness against light. The past against a possible future. Prison against freedom. Keep the secret versus let the secret go. Keep the secret. No, tell. Then, I heard the sound of thunder. Boom! I looked at the floor and blurted, "When I was eleven, I was raped."

April didn't blink. I was watching and waiting for her mouth to fall open in judgment and disgust as I feared people would do if they knew, but her compassion did not allow her to judge. Once the words left my mouth, the flood started, like a gate thrown open to let wild horses run into vast open spaces. There it was, at last, in the light. Not a secret anymore. And, of course, there were tears, buckets of tears. Rivers of tears. I cried oceans of tears in April's office, but on that day, they were tears of relief and mourning, relief from the chains of a forty-year-old shame secret and the mourning of the death of the past. Good thing I brought my own tissues.

Telling the secret came with both benefits and struggles. With more visits and tear-filled sessions, my shame became lighter but also exposed hundreds of wounds still bleeding. Each injury required a deeper look, which led to understanding and knowledge, which led to healing and restoration. With more and more healing, there came the need to learn a whole new way of thinking. The lies would need to be replaced with truth. With God, and through April, I rewrote my story. I gave God thirty days, and God gave me freedom from shame. Since He was right, I decided I would give Him thirty more days, maybe more.

















5. One thing that helps us grasp the truth that God is always watching over us, that He is present in every circumstance, is meditating on Scripture. As you meditate on the following Scripture, think about the comfort that comes from experiencing God's presence right where you are no matter what has happened to you or because of what you have done. He sees you, knows you and is always present and ready to rescue you.

*“Don't be afraid of those who want to kill your body; they cannot touch your soul. Fear only God, who can destroy both soul and body in hell. What is the price of two sparrows—one copper coin? But not a single sparrow can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it. And the very hairs on your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows.” (Matthew 10:28-31)*

What thoughts come to mind when you read and meditate on these words? What comfort do you have to know that God sees you, no matter where you are?

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